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Preface

Welcome note for the conference on coordinated cross-sector continuity of care in Odense, 31 March 2011

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Abstract

Ensuring continuity of care across different sectors is one of the greatest challenges for the health service in Denmark. It is a challenge that we are already working hard to address, but also one that we are not going to meet either today or tomorrow. We know that citizens, quite rightly, expect coherence and continuity of care if they should become ill, regardless of whether their care is provided by a hospital, their general practitioner or the municipality. One sector needs to know what the other is doing—or *not* doing. Collaboration and communication are key words in this context.

By ensuring continuity we can provide patients with the care they need at the right time—no more, no less. This ensures quality, efficient production and satisfaction. Patients who are suffering multiple illnesses and vulnerable patients with highly complex illnesses in particular, constitute one of our main focus groups.

In the Region of Southern Denmark, we strive continuously to create continuity of care for patients. We face both structural and cultural barriers in some areas, but we have some excellent tools at our disposal. These include well-structured care packages at the region's hospitals, the establishment of new, shared emergency departments, co-operation agreements concerning the admission and discharge of patients, health contracts with the municipalities and patient care programmes for the chronically ill. All cross-sector care is supported by integrated electronic communication systems. The many various initiatives contribute to greater coordination and continuity, not only internally between the specialist departments at the region's hospitals, but also when it comes to collaboration with general practitioners and the municipalities.

I hope that this conference will serve to bring new research to light and allow you all to benefit from each other's knowledge and experience when it comes to creating continuity of care. Enjoy the conference.

Powerpoint presentation available from: http://www.integratedcare.org/Portals/0/uploads/congresses/Busk%20welcome.pdf